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GENDERED NEGOTIATIONS: HUNTING AND COLONIALISM IN THE LATE NINETEENTH CENTURY NILGIRIS

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Shikar or game hunting in India was one of the sites on which the colonial project tried to construct and affirm the difference between its 'superior' self and the inferiorised 'native' other. In legitimising colonialism, the self was presented as risk-taking, perseverant and super-masculine; and the other was constructed as utilitarian and effeminate.[2] The process of affirming this masculine-feminine/coloniser-colonised difference, however, faced much rough weather in the terrain of actual practice. Often, the supposedly effeminate native exhibited strong streaks of masculinity in hunting or at least made the coloniser's masculinity to appear fragile and unsure. Similarly, a large section of the European emigrants in India, especially from the lower echelons, failed to conform to the colonial notion of masculinity and hunted in the same fashion as the stereotyped native - utilitarian and effeminate. In short, the boundaries between the self and the other, as constructed by the colonial discourse on hunting, was fuzzy, weak and incomplete.

The present paper analyses this tension ridden discursive context as *one* of the reasons for the passing of the Nilgiri Game and Fish Preservation Act of 1879 and its more stringent later incarnations during the late 19th and the early 20th centuries.[3] The Act, which was passed by the Madras Government and was ostensibly meant to conserve wild life, restricted legally sanctioned hunting to trophy-seeking, and marked out other forms of hunting, particularly utilitarian hunting aimed at protection of crops, procurement of meat and so on, as illicit.

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Department of History, School of Oriental and African Studies, London, on 25 February 1992. I am grateful to Padmini Swaminathan, S.Neelakantan, Paul Appasamy, S.Janakarajan, A.R.Venkatachalapathy, J.Jeyaranjan and Anandhi, S. for their useful comments on an earlier draft. Special thanks are due to Burton Stein from whose scathing criticisms this paper has benefited much.

2. The present paper draws its perspective by and large from Joan Wallace Scott's (1986) well-known paper arguing for a shift from 'women's history' to 'history of gender'. According to her, the category of gender not merely illuminates the unequal relations of power between male and female, but helps one to understand that the unequal male-female relations are extended via metaphors to varied areas of social life so as to signify unequal relations of power *in general.*

   On the specific relationship between colonialism and gender, see Nandy (1983), Ballhatchat (1980), and Hyam (1991).

3. I need to insist that the present paper deals with only one of the reasons for the passing of the Game Act, because there could have been other reasons such as the formation of new attitudes towards cruelty to animals, interest in natural history and awareness about the extinction of different species of animals. These need further exploration.

The Masculine Self

From the 1820s onwards, the hill station of Ootacamund or Ooty[4] in the Nilgiri Hills of the Madras Presidency slowly acquired its character as a town predominantly populated with European emigrants. W the Europeans affirming their presence in the town, game hunting in the outlying hills became a favourite pastime among its upper class residents. As early as 1845, Lieut. (and later Sir) Thomas Peyton kept a pack of fox hounds in the Nilgiris for purposes of hunting. While Madras hounds were brought to the hills in 1864 and 1865, J. W. Breeks, the first Commissioner of Ooty, organised a regular pack of hounds on a steady footing in 1869. In 1896, the government, at the initiative of Lord Wenlock, the Governor of Madras, reserved 30 sq. miles of grass lands and *sholas* (i.e. wooded patches which intersperse the grass lands), lying immediately west of Ooty, for the hunting of hill jackals (Francis 1908 : 35-6; see also, Eagan 1916: 39-40). This exclusive hunting preserve was named 'Wenlock Downs'. The Ooty Hunt, which was usually organised twice a week between May and September and supported by voluntary subscriptions, was an exciting as well as an exacting event for the residents of and the visitors to the hills. To quote an eyewitness account of the Hunt, as conducted during the 1880s,

> The swamps, impassable by horses, do not stop hounds, and over the sound turf they travel at a pace which I have never seen exceeded, and not often equalled, in England or Ireland. The hill jackal is an animal of wonderful speed and bottom. I should consider him the superior of the pampered foxes of the English counties. The pack then consisted of imported foxhounds, but later on many were successfully bred on the hills, and the country-bred hounds were quite the equals of the imported... The pack has at times suffered badly when a fighting boar has been bayed in a difficult place and encounters with panther and hyena have occured. In view of the possibility of trouble, the hunt was followed by a mounted native servant, whose appearance used to rouse the astonishment and amusement of new comers. The functionary carried, among other weapons of offence and defence, a terrier in a bag, a rifle, a hog spear, a pick, and a spade. He looked like a equestrian Christmas tree (Horne 1928 : 56-7).

Ooty Hunt was of such emblematic significance in the life of the town that it was always prominently advertised to attract visitors. A guide book on the Nilgiris proudly claimed, "The roll of Masters and those who have in their time hunted with the Ootacamund hounds would disclose names of some well-known at some of the best hunting centres in the United Kingdom" (*Illustrated Guide to Nilgiris...* 1912 : 59).

Routinised as well as highly ritualised, the Ooty Hunt accounted for only a fraction of hunting activities that abounded in the Nilgiris. While the residents, armed with guns and accompanied by native trackers, beaters and coolies, fanned into the length and breadth of the hills to hunt tigers, panthers, bisons, jackals, sambhur deers, ibex etc., the hills, as fertile ground for hunting, held out great promises for the European visitors from the plains. As `Big Bore' (1924 : xvii) recounted, "When the shooting season draws I can well picture sportsmen feverishly awaiting sanction of

4. For a formal history of Ootacamund, see (Price 1908).

leave and it is usually about the middle of October that inquiries by the dozens are received by the Taxidermists as to the best shooting grounds, route, mode of transport of baggage etc., winding up with the usual, 'I'll wire you when to expect me'."

What is important for the argument of this paper is the ideological attributes of this extensive hunting culture in the Nilgiris or in what manner the colonial discourse[5] encoded these hunting activities.

A search for answers to this question may well begin with Walter Campbell's *The Old Forest Ranger* (1845), one of the earliest books to be published on hunting expeditions in the Nilgiri hills. Campbell, who was known as 'jungle wallah' ('the man of the jungle') among his friends in the 62nd regiment, wrote his book in a semi-fictional mode[6] and the narrative moves around four characters: Lorimer, a veteran hunter with several years of experience; Captain Mansfield, a "daring sportsman" with an "aristocratic cast of features"; Charles, a novice who was being initiated into the delights of hunting; and Kate, the pretty daughter of Lorimer who was in love with Charles.[7] Mansfield, in the course of a conversation with the still inexperienced Charles, gives us an almost transparent account of what hunting signified for the white male in the hills. To quote him, "... I am satisfied it is not cruelty - it is not a thirst for blood which inspires us with a love for the chase. No : it is a far nobler feeling; a species of ambition - a love of enterprise; a pleasure arising from which depends on the difficulties to be surmounted in the attainment of our object... And oh! the electric thrill of exultation when the crack of his rifle is answered by that dull soft *thud*, grateful to the sportsman's ear as the voice of her he loves..." (Campbell, 1845 : 24-5). This "far nobler feeling", which is explicitly inscribed with overtones of sexual conquest, was not far removed from militaristic ambitions of empire building. Campbell (1885 : 49), referring to deer-stalking, which called forth "all the energies of the hunter's mind as well as of his body", wrote, "it is a campaign in the miniature; it is a study for a general." Instructively, Charles in Campbell's account, not only graduates into a deadly shot, before marrying Kate, but also joins the Mahratta war and takes over the "Fort of Koolgiedroog, said to be the strongest in the Maharattah Country" (Campbell 1845 : 283). In fact, most of the hunting manuals placed great emphasis on certain masculine physical culture. For instance, 'Killdeer' (1909 : 4), advising amateur shikaries, noted,

5. By colonial discourse, we mean the discourse of the upper class European male emigrants. In the highly hierarchised European emigrant community in the Nilgiris, there were those who suffered different degrees of marginality given their lower social status: "Religious worship and the several masonic lodges were perhaps the only areas" where hierarchy and segregation were not emphasised in Ooty (Hockings 1989 : 349; see also, Mandelbaum 1989 : 12). These lower rank Europeans did not quite comply with the norms of the upper class European emigrants. These issues are addressed in the succeeding sections of this paper.

6. Later European writers from the Nilgiris, who recounted hunting experiences in a 'realist' mode, discounted Campbell's account as fantastic and exaggerated. For instance, G.A.R.Dawson referred to Campbell's book as "touched with the colours of romance and "sensations", partaking largely of the hyperbole of shikar" ('An Old Shikarri' 1880 : vii; see also, Fletcher 1911 : viii). But Campbell's mode of narration has the distinct advantage of *openly* articulating the colonial attitude(s) towards hunting through its semi-fictional characters.

7. In his later book *My Indian Journal*, Campbell disclosed the real identities of Lorimer and Kate. The fictional Lorimer was in real life Judge Lushington of Ooty, and Kate was Lushington's daughter Hester who was "the most charming girl" Campbell had ever seen in India (Campbell 1864 : 351).

"The tyro should be temperate in all his habits, if he wishes to attain to that good physique which will alone enable him to support the severe exertions [of hunting] so opposed to those of his humdrum life at head-quarters."

In short, hunting was an ideological marker which affirmed the colonising upper class white male as super-masculine.[8] The pretty Kate tells it all in a playful, bantering conversation with Charles: "I send you to the jungles on purpose to make a man of you - to give you an opportunity of performing deeds of valour worthy of my smiles - I expect to see you return a mighty hunter, a terror to wild beasts, a fearless rider of the `tempest-footed' Arab..." (Campbell 1845 : 246).

In emphasising hunting as a worthy pastime for the European male in the Nilgiri hills, certain other popular pastimes of the emigrant community such as badminton were marginalised and labelled as effeminate. Exasperated about how the young men of the hills were not taken to hunting, 'Flint Lock' lamented, "...Men now a days appear to confine themselves solely to *effeminate* games such as Badminton etc; or in fact anything that will give them an excuse for flirting with the other sex. Even when they do attempt something hardier, it is only to sun themselves in the eyes of the "weaker vessels"... Under these circumstances it is quite refreshing to meet with specimens of *man-hood* like 'Riffle' and 'Nipple' who acknowledge to the witchery of the hunting knife and rifle, and whom nothing could *seduce* from the keen enjoyment of the sylvan woods... I trust Rifle, Nipple etc., will not become disgusted with the general apathy which now pervades our *enervated* community with reference to all things *manly* ..." (*SOIO,* July 7, 1883: emphasis mine). In the passing, one may note here that Flint Lock's letter, apart from developing a hierarchy of European pastimes in the Nilgiris, vividly brings out how hunting provided space for male bonding and thus affirmed masculinity.[9]

It is not only that different pastimes of the European emigrants were hierarchised around the binary opposites of masculinity/feminity, there also developed a hierarchy of modes of hunting on the very same principles. While such modes of hunting which accentuated the real or imagined dangers of hunting were privileged and treated as masculine,[10] those modes which were risk avoiding were slighted as effeminate. Campbell (1845 : 1) was candid on this point when he wrote, "... those who habitually indulge in the innocent pastime of peacock and jungle fowl shooting, are young gentlemen who have devoted their early youth to the rearing of tame rabbits, have never

8. As MacKenzie (1988 : 168-69) argues, the European hunting tradition in India was constituted from, among other things, the hunting traditions of earlier Indian royal courts. Thus the construction of the notion of colonial masculinity (in the sphere of hunting) was not entirely British but it drew upon pre-existing Indian elite traditions too.

9. See also, F.W.F.Fletcher's (1911) book on sport on the Nilgiris and in Wyanad which begins with a poem dedicating the book to the author's trusted .450 rifle. The poem lists such games as cricket, lawn tennis and racing, but privileges hunting over the rest. In Fletcher's estimate, the worst offenders were those who sought pleasures in love in contrast to hardy games. The poem thus begins:

"Let Love-sick swains / In Cupid's chains / Bound fast, prate of their blisses; / And rave and swear / Naught can compare / With soft vows, sealed with kisses."

10. Only an insignificantly small number of European hunters were killed by wild animals during hunting expeditions. Thus, the dangers of hunting as represented by the colonial discourse was highly exaggerated and often imagined.

learnt to appreciate the beauties of a *grooved barrel* ..." While most European emigrants did not subscribe to such a stringent stance on game-bird shooting and bagging the first woodcock of the season was "reckoned the blue riband of Nilgiri sport" (Fletcher 1911 : 402), they did discount other modes of hunting as unmanly. One such mode was beating the forests for hunting animals as they run out. To quote 'Barhoo', the sporting correspondent of the *South of India Observer,* the most popular English newspaper published from Ooty, "Now...compare ... a stalker's idea of sport with its "per contra" viz., "beating" with a pack of abominable yelping curs and a host of dirty, half starved, howling coolies, with their usual accompaniment of discordant bugles, tom toms, rattles and other abominations. The timid denizens of the jungle rush frantically out on every side of a sholah, but at every outlet are greeted with a volley of all sorts of missiles from buck shots to bullets and shells... The damage done to the game on these Hills, from... the unsportsman-like methods of scouring large tracts of splendid shooting ground with the hideous rubble... is incalculable..." (*SOIO*, April 27, 1877). Similarly, shooting tigers from *machan* (a platform erected on trees) was also ideologically devalued and presented as only fit for the effeminate native. For instance, on a pair of tigers ravaging the cattle in the vicinity of Attycul, a place five miles away from Ooty, the *South of India Observer* commented, "Sportsmen, *as a rule,* do not care about perching in a machan all night, but native shikaries would gladly do so if they had the incentive of a large reward" (*SOIO*, September 19, 1885; emphasis mine).

In contrast to these so-called risk avoiding modes of hunting, other modes which were supposed to involve greater risk came in for much celebration in the colonial discourse. A case in point is tiger-shooting on foot (which was practised in the Nilgiri hills) as compared to tiger-shooting from the perch of an elephant's back (which was practised especially in the northern India). In the words of 'Big Bore' (1924 : 66): "When perched on an elephant, animals do not take any notice, and are easily approached, while the actual shooting is a cold-blooded affair. Compare this to the excitement of a long stalk where the sportsman's knowledge of woodcraft is pitted against the instincts of an animal always on the alert and difficult to circumvent." Another account derisively equated the dangers of tiger-shooting from elephant's back with the dangers involved in rabbit-shooting (*SOIO,* October 20, 1883)! Even within the mode of tiger-shooting on foot, acts such as shooting a tiger which was passing the hunter side on or which was facing the hunter directly were treated as more dangerous and hence more masculine and desirable. It was claimed that in such acts of hunting, if the tiger did not succumb to the shot, it would "infalliably kill" the assailant (*SOIO,* October 20, 1888).

Interestingly, when a correspondent of the *Pioneer* claimed that hunters of Ooty could afford to shoot tigers on foot because jungles of the Nilgiris were not as dense as those in Bengal, it immediately drew angry protests from the Europeans in the hills. In an indignant rejoinder, 'Nipple' replied, "No Mr Pioneer! in this benighted hole, we don't stalk behind ambush to take gallant stripes at a disadvantage, as your correspondent insinuates. We follow and fight him fairly. We take up his pugs and track on through dense jungle and fourteen feet grass - incredible as it may appear to enlightened Bengalese - until he declines to be chased any longer, and roars defiance. And then in combat *a l'outrance* we tackle the grand brute: nerve and skill against brute rage and power..." (*SOIO,* June 28, 1884).

In fact, among the different segments of the European emigrant community in India, there

was intense intra-elite rivlary to establish who was the bravest of the brave. The Europeans of the Bombay Presidency, who prided themselves as "the best sportsmen in India" looked down upon their counterparts in the Madras Presidency and referred to them in ridicule as `Mulls', "a nickname nearly equivalent to ... English `Cockney'" (Campbell, 1864 : 351n; see also *SOIO*, June 1, 1889). The Europeans of the Nilgiris constantly combated this appellation.[11]

These hierarchies of pastimes and modes of hunting which encoded colonial hunting as masculine were accompanied by a hierarchisation of words which denoted hunters. While those who conformed to these norms of masculinity while hunting were rewarded with the singularly privileged expression of 'sportsmen', others were degradingly referred to as 'shooters', 'poachers' and 'butchers'. These definitions, at one level, created an ambiance for the European hunters to take pride in the difficulties encountered during hunting expeditions. Fletcher (1911 : 356-7), for instance, triumphantly recorded, "I once bagged a stag that had achieved a reputation for cunning that he was known locally as the wizard." Detailing more about this wizard, he went on, "His vigilance and cunning had made him quite a local celebrity, and the natives declared he bore a charmed life. Many a bullet had sped after him, he at the one end of the isthmus, the man with the other, but hitherto he had always escaped scatheless." Another hunter, exhibiting a great degree of narcisism, introduced himself as, "For about 16 years, I have shot constantly all over these hills, and have, I suppose, killed something like a thousand heads of larger Neilgherry game" (*SOIO*, October 2, 1880; see also `Big Bore' 1924 : 6). Concomitantly, displaying hunting trophies became central to the hunting culture of Ootacamund. A stark example of this may be the case of Gordon Hadfield, a forest officer of the Nilgiris, and his brother Edward Hadfield, who returned to the hills from the Indian police. The Hadfield brothers, well-known for tiger shooting, mounted the trophies themselves and exhibited them in a special building by their house: "A visit to the Hadfield museum was part of the routine prescribed for every sporting visitor to the hills" (Molony 1926 : 50). This trophy accumulating spirit resulted in some European buying them even from the natives (`An Old Shikarri' 1880 : 3).[12]

This process of affirming the coloniser as masculine, at another level, created jealously in the Nilgiris about successful European hunters. Thomas Simon, a planter from Billicul, earned the much sought-after reputation of a deadly tiger-slayer in a short span of time. The comment of the *South of India Observer* that "he is rapdily earning a reputation for tiger slaying similar to

11. For an analysis of similar struggle among the British army officials in India to differentiate and distinguish their regiments as the bravest in comparison to those of others, see (Caplan 1991).

12. A spoof on the craze for hunting trophies among the European emigrants in the Nilgiris, exposed the seamier side of the hunting culture thus: "...this eternal enquiry regarding the number of tigers I had killed grew to be unendurable, particularly when coupled with the look of scorn and disgust which was evoked when I was compelled to deny the soft impeachment of having shot any. At length I took to blushing and stammering when repudiating the honour and felt as guilty as a thief. I *was* disgraceful, I mentally acknowledged, never to have shot a tiger and then I took to prevaricating to support my reputation in this respect. I bought a fine skin for fifty rupees from `Cockshot', and when the indispensible question was again propounded to me, I exhibited it as the trophy of my last tiger..." (*SOIO*, March 26, 1889).

that of the late captain Godfrey, who in his time, accounted for ninety-nine elephants" (*SOIO*, July 16, 1881) immediately evoked certain predictable response. `Fizz Bang' questioned the tiger slaying abilities of Simon and wrote, "Would Mr Simon kindly inform us how long a time it has taken him to account for all these beasts? Also whether they were *all* or *any of them* shot in a *bona fide* shikar manner; or whether they were poisoned, or caught in traps and then potted whilst helplessly grinning through the bars of a strong cage?..." (*SOIO*, July 23, 1881). It was as if who was more masculine, Simon or `Fizz Bang'.

The Utilitarian/Effeminate Other

In contrast to this construction of the self as super-masculine, the colonial discourse represented the hunting activities of the indigenous people - especially the Badagas, the Kurumbas, the Kotas and the Irulas - as merely utilitarian and effeminate.[13] Towards this end, the colonial discourse singled out *an* aspect of the native's hunting intentions, i.e. his desire to have meat, especially venison, and deployed it as if it were the *only* motive for their hunting activities.

Writing about Badagas, 'Barhoo' exclaimed,

> The craving for animal food amongst the Badaga population of the Hills is something extraordinary...their fondness for venison is not exceeded by any alderman in the old country.
>
> A Badaga will cheerfully work all day long for a few pounds of meat, so, knowing this, some men have made it a point of paying their coolies in *meat* instead of money ... (*SOIO*, September 15, 1877).

While 'Big Bore' (1924 : 100) and 'Hawkeye' (1881 : 54)[14] claimed that the European hunters who failed to provide meat to their native servants would not get them to cooperate during hunting trips,[15] G. A. R. Dawson observed, "...the Badagas and others are in the habit of following the

13. The colonial discourse not only inferiorised the native, but also the European women in the hills. I hope to write a fuller paper on this soon. However, for the present, let me merely cite an example as illustration: In one of his hunting expeditions, F.W.F.Fletcher was accompanied by two of his neices and a lady friend. Recollecting the event, he wrote, "Here was a grand chance of giving the girls a sight of a sambur stag in all his native majesty, so I told them to creep forward with the utmost caution and peep over the cliff. R and D obeyed my instruction to the letter; but Miss.C (whose habitual impatience of advice tendered by a mere man would have done credit to a militant suffragate) scorned concealment, with the result that next moment the stags were flying in terror from this petticoat intrusion and they vanished over the crest of the hill before I could get a shot" (Fletcher 1911 : 376).

14. 'Hawkeye' was the pseudonym of Major General R.Hamilton. A contemporary described Hamilton (and Charles Haveloc) as "the leading authorities and most experienced in hill shikar as well as close observers of Nature" ('An Old Shikarri' 1880 : viii).

15. Fletcher (1911 : 389-90) cites an instance in which he denied venison to an erring native shikari as punishment for distrubing a quarry which, however, was ultiamtely shot by him.

wild dog when in pursuit of game, and driving them off and taking possession of whatever they may have killed..." ('An Old Shikarri' 1880 : 69). The other side of representing the native as singularly venison-seeking was that he did not discriminate between trophy-yielding and non trophy-yielding animals; and he went about shooting whatever yielded meat. In short, in the colonial discourse on hunting, the native was "too lazy to work; but who infinitely preferred the, to him, more congenial occupation of slouching from sholah to sholah, at all hours of the day and night and all seasons of the year" (*SOIO*, April 21, 1877).

No doubt venison had its venerated place in the gastronomical universe of the natives of the Nilgiri hills. But their attitude towards hunting was more complex than merely bounded by a search for venison as portrayed in the colonial discourse. With wild animals dangerously standing between life and death, a good crop and a bad crop, they acquired a large presence in the religious/ritual life of the natives. The Badagas not only kept up memories of their encounters with tigers by means of terracota and stone images, but also ritually hunted wild animals (preferably a sambhur deer which did the maximum harm to their crops) during the fire-walking ceremony at Melur, just before the cultivation began (Thurston and Rangachari 1909 : I, 71 and 100-1).[16] Such ritual hunting was practised by the Kotas too (Thurston and Rangachari 1909 : IV, 16).

Such a ritual universe populated with animals had its own bearing on the relationship between different groups of indigenous people in the hills. For instance, "the immunity and fearlessness with which they [Kurumbas] moved about forests (even in the dead of night) which are infested with wild beasts, have imbued the other natives with a belief that they are sorcerers and that wild animals have no power to harm them" (*SOIO*, September 27, 1884). The Irulas were also credited with such extraordinary powers: "The Irulas are held in superstitious dread by all other tribes but the Kurumbas. There are many traditions concerning their power over wild beasts. They are accredited with being able to tame tigers, and the fable goes that the women in the woods leave their children in the care of a tigeress" (Eagan 1916 : 112). This complex domain of attitudes towards animals, which were mediated by pre-existing notions of religio-magical powers rather than by notions of masculinity and feminity, would have undergone changes with the Badagas and the Todas acquiring the skill in handling firearms. It is, thus, evident that the colonial emphasis on venison seeking as the sole feature of native hunting was indeed reductive.

Not only that the hunting by the native was inferiorised as merely venison seeking, but their modes of hunting were also carefully scrutinised and declared as effeminate, i.e., unworthy of what was defined by the European elite as sport. The manner of shooting game birds by the native was contemptuously described as "These scoundrals used to make no secret that they shoot jungle and spurfowls *on their nests*" (*SOIO*, April 21, 1877). Their method of hunting hares was also equally treated as unmanly: "The plan the native pursues is not to beat up puss [hare] from her form and shoot her while running. Such a procedure involves too much trouble. He merely

16. Imitation, as well known, is an important aspect of magical practices. By ritually killing a sambhur before cultivation had begun, the Badagas perhaps tried to avert the potential damage to crops by these animals. In 1883 and 1894, i.e after the Game Act was passed, special orders were passed allowing the Badagas to carry out this ritual hunt during the close season when hunting was legally prohibited.

goes of an evening, and quietly sits in ambush near an open glade on the skirts of a sholah, shooting his unsuspecting victims in that manner" (*SOIO*, October 9, 1878). When it came to the question of tigers, which off and on killed the cattle of the native, it was presented as though the native was no match either to the beast or to the European hunter who valourously sought them after. For instance, writing about a leopard killed by Thomas Kay, a well known tiger slayer in the hills, the *South of India Observer* remarked,

> ... there must be several of these destructive creatures prowling about in the neighbourhood of Billicul, and as the burghers [Badagas] are either too timid or too lazy to go after them, they are likely to continue their depredation until Mr Kay, or some other European gentleman, takes in hand to hunt them up and destroy them (*SOIO*, March 15, 1879).

Occassionally, when a native killed a tiger, it was discounted as not conforming to the colonial canons of sport. Reacting to a native who shot a large tiger and carried it to Ooty, it was commented, "All honour to the tiger slayer, when he kills his quarry fairly. We can admire men who deliberately go up to an animal who, to use an Americanism, 'could claw him into immortal chaos': but when the latter savage brute is shot from a safe elevation where he has no chance of reaching his assailant, we really think the victim is unfairly dealt with. Our remarks are occassioned by the fact of a large tiger being brought in the other day by a Chetty. The public immediately flew to the conclusion that the destroyer of this savage animal was a hero. Our information however leads us to believe that the man who, by a fluke destroyed the tiger, perched himself safely in a tree when he fired at his quarry. A wide distinction should be made between men who risk their lives on foot against stripes and those who shoot him from a safe elevation, a distinction that should be marked by a difference in reward" (*SOIO*, February 26, 1879).

Perhaps the best way to sum up how the colonial discourse represented the hunting activities of the native is to quote 'Hawkeye' (1928 : 310): "The native can give up his gun, or at any rate his shooting - we will not defile the word "sport" by applying it to him."

Discordant Reality

Importantly, the actual world of hunting in the Nilgiri hills kept the boundaries between the super-masculine self of the coloniser and the effeminate native other, as constructed in the colonial discourse, in a vulnerable state of imcompleteness. The ground level reality in the hills was that the native did not behave as effeminate as he was stereotyped; and also substantial sections of the European emigrant community in the hills did not exhibit the required quality of masculinity which the colonial discourse tried to invest them with. The factors which accounted for this incompleteness of boundaries between the self and the other emanated both from the natives as well as from a section of the European emigrants themselves. First, let us take a look at the manner in which the native posed a threat to the colonial construction of hunting.

First of all, the European hunters could not pursue game in the Nilgiris without the help of the natives. It was indeed the native who controlled a vast regime of knowledge about hunting grounds, modes of tracking different animals and so on. Their skills in these matters were often openly acknowledged by the Europeans. Fletcher (1911 : 279; also 278), for instance, noted, "No

European can hope to equal, much less to surpass, the marvellous skill in tracking possessed by the junglemen, such as Nayakas and Kurumbas..." In a more detailed account, `Big Bore' (1924 : 50) confessed as follows about two of his trackers, Jowra and Mara: "The shikaris of this place are experienced men while two in particular, Jowra and Mara are `artists' in their profession. These two are blesse with extraordinary sight and it is no exaggeration to say that with their naked eyes they can detect an object which you and I would find difficult to locate even through the most powerful binoculars. I have known both to `pick up' the mere flick of the ear of a deer at a distance of nearly two hundred yards while the rest of the animal was practically invisible in the undergrowth. There are many sportsmen who claim to have good sight but they have admitted their inferiority to Mara and Jowra in this respect." Displaying open racism, the European hunters often represented these skills of the native as that of a savage, i.e., of someone who belonged to nature rather than to culture. Walter Campbell (1845 : 91), not only likened the movements of Kamah, a native shikari from Dharwar in Mysore country, to that of "a hound breast-high on scent", but also elaborated further that "He crept along with the air of a tiger about to spring on his prey; his rolling eyes flashed fire; his wide nostrils were distended to the utmost limits, and even his ears appeared to erect themselves, like those of a wild animal."

Though the Europeans could, thus, at the discursive level, devalue the knowledge regime of the native, the very same knowledge regime, at the level of hunting practices, made them dependent on the native. According to 'Big Bore' (1924 : 75):

> The headman of a village is a magnate not to be despised for he can be of great assistance if he chooses and his influence at times goes a long way to make a shoot successful especially if beaters are required. It is usually the case that the villagers know all about the lie of the land and exactly where an animal should be looked for and with a little tact and kindness they will come forward voluntarily to assist in showing a stranger the sports... With a doubtful shikkari on strange ground, and on unfavourable terms with the villagers, the sportsman can hope for little or no success.

Fletcher (1911:147) echoed the same realtiy when he wrote, "... care of one's men is called for not only from a humanitarian point of view. Once bit, twice shy; and the man who ill treats his beaters, or exposes them to grave risks, simply destroys his chance of sport thereafter."[17]

Significantly it was not merely the European hunter who was aware of his dependence on the native, but the native also knew that his knowledge was power. Often he deployed this understanding to his own advantage and as an 'every day form of resistance' against the power weilding coloniser.[18] Take for example, the following description of the ingenuity shown by the native while tracking for his European master:

> A favourite trick with some of the Musinigudi men is to spin out the days on the principle of, 'the longer you stay the more wages I earn.' As for instance, when the shikari intends

17. See also, Campbell (1845 : 78-79).

18. On the concept of 'everyday forms of resistance' that are employed by the subaltern classes against the elites (as opposed to confrontational modes of resistance used during riots and similar events of social upheaval), see Scott (1985). See also, Scott and Kerkvliet (1986) and Haynes and Prakash (1991).

a day to prove blank he will turn up wearing a pair of sandals, and if made to discard these ornaments his indifference to his responsibilities will be noticable; probably he will head for a particular locality where you can expect to see very little...

> That day will prove a blank one for you and possibly the next one too, so having wasted your time by which he alone benefits, the third day will see you beaming with smiles as a result of having had some luck, and instead of administering what is tehnically termed a 'straight left' as a token of appreciation of his effort, you forget all about your troubles and fall into a reverie of supreme satisfaction. It must not however be taken for granted that this is the case always.
>
> Another favourite dodge is to suggest they should be sent out to mark down game. You will readily agree to this arrangement and will spend the intervening time in fond anticipation while all the while your worthy tracker is at home attending to his own affairs ('Big Bore', 1924 : 59).

As another European hunter put it, 'If you do not make a "chum" of him [the native tracker], believe me he will ... always taking you on false sports and showing you but little sport" ('Killdeer' 1902 : 31).

The recalcitrant native shikari, who thus ruptured the masculine front of the coloniser, forced them to look for tame, obedient native shikaris. Reporting a hunting expedition to the Kundhas, 'Rifle' proudly announced, "I suppose I had travelled over some six or seven miles, accompanied by two Badagas, one of which, a little boy about fourteen years old, is my pet shikaree; he has the most wonderful eyesight I have ever come across. I do not patronise the Ooty shikarees; my experience of them is that, with few exceptions, they are a bragging, jawing, idle lot of rascals. My Badagas tell less lies, are willing to go anywhere and do anything, do not bother me for arrack [country liquor], and never go firing off my guns, a trick many shikarees are very fond of..." (*SOIO*, March 25, 1882). But the ultimate dream of the coloniser was of course to free himself completely from the native shikari and be on his own:

> I have attained some slight degree of proficiency in the difficult art [of tracking]; and I say unhesitatingly that until I learnt to interpret the jungle signs, the full meaning of "sport" was a sealed book for me... Trust me, the man who allows his success to depend entirely on the skill of an army of native shikkaris, and whose personal share in that success is limited to pulling the trigger of the newest and deadliest thing in rifles when the game is found for him, knows nothing of the true delight of sport... For my own part, I would rather bag a tiger or bison by my own effort than a hundred which I owed to the exertions and the skill of my native shikaris (Fletcher 1911 : 279).

It was not only the traditional knowledge of the native about hunting grounds and tracking which made the colonial discourse shaky and untenable, but also certain new knowledge which he acquired from the coloniser himself. With the introduction of firearms in the native community - originally distributed by the government to protect crops from wild hogs - there emerged a stratum of sharp shots among the natives. They could wield the gun as efficiently as the coloniser and often in this process 'deprived' the coloniser of sport. Lamenting about this, 'Hawkeye' (1881 : 207-8) claimed, "A few years ago, for the sake of a rupee or two, many a report of the whereabouts

of a fine stag or fierce boar was brought in by the natives of the several villages around Ooty; now-a-days they prefer to keep the sport to themselves, all owing to their having arms. Fancy a Toda turned sportsman, and a deadly shot too! I have heard of such a thing: but they have taken in these days to turbans and umbrellas, so it is not to be wondered at. Alas ! for the good old times!" At least occassionally, this skill of the native made him look more of a sportsman in comparison to the European hunter. 'Killdeer' (1909 : 31), advising amateur hunters, noted, "He [the native shikari] will be specially bad if he shows you game and you frequently miss it in firing at it, *fancies you as sharp as himself...*" (emphasis mine).

This newly acquired skill of the native was mobilised by a section of the European hunters in the hills for different purposes such as guarding plantation crops from sambhur. Also, they accompanied hunting parties, carrying guns as if equals. The purists among the European hunters vehemently resented the idea of permitting paid native shikaris to shoot. While 'Rifle' argued "...to arm ... natives with guns, place them to guard the passes, and shoot when the sholas were beaten, is, I say, inexcusable" (*SOIO*, October 2, 1880), 'Hawkeye' (1881 : 27) made the following appeal to the fraternity of European hunters:

> Game is becoming more and more scarce every succeeding season, and it is not fair to the sporting community at large that paid shikarries should be permitted to shoot. Let our sportsmen by all means, shoot what they can during the season; but let them have what others of their own clan may leave them, - *not the leavings of the native shikarries...* I say, let them not shoot at all; and I call upon all who have permitted the practice, to stop it (emphasis mine).

Perhaps, the slightly flippant but famous story of the 'dog boys of Ooty' captures how the natives posed a constant threat to the super-masculine image of the colonisers. The story goes as follows: "Hunting is proverbially a contagious sport, and our local dog boys have furnished the latest illustration of this axiom. They have become so keen that from assisting to hunt jackals during the day, they have taken to chase bipeds at night. Their favourite amusement is to sally forth after dusk armed with formidable clubs, and to beat, maltreat and pursue every belated wayfarer they fall in with. Several petitions on this subject have been presented to the local authorities, and about a fortnight ago a very inadequate fine was inflicted on the heroes for a particular wanton assault on a European. As might have been expected the latter trifling fine had no deterrant effect, and the dog boys have again signalized themselves this week by severely belabouring several others" (*SOIO*, September 12, 1885).

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Now to other side of the story: how a section of the European emigrants themselves posed a threat to the colonial discourse. It was almost a commonplace in the Nilgiris society that a substantial number of the Europeans were not really interested in acquiring hunting trophies, but only in the sheer delights of being trigger-happy and in procuring game meat. As 'Barhoo' posed, "Will you, believe me, on these hills there existed, *not long ago* (one or two still flourish) *Europeans*, who set a pretty example to the rascals [natives]... by killing sambur by the dozen *all the year round...* How common it is for one to hear, that such and such shikar party, just come in from Avalanche and Sisparah has bagged 8 or 10 sambur. If you question them any one of the said lot as to

the number of *stags* they have bagged, how chary they are, in 9 cases out of 10, of giving you a straight forward answer! But just get hold of one of their shikarries and slip a few cheroots and a rupee into his ever ready hand then out comes a nice little tale. Almost every sambur was either a doe or a stag in velvet. "How did the Sahibs get them? by stalking?" An upward screw of the mouth and a shake of the head, no, no. The sahibs he was out with did not understand stalking..." (*SOIO*, April 21, 1877). These non-conforming European hunters were accused by the purists of setting a bad example for the natives (*SOIO*, May 28, 1879). Significantly, the purists denied the status of 'gentlemen' to these non-conformists and clubbed them with lowly plebians. While Barhoo derided them as "tinkers and tailors of European extraction who call themselves *sportsman*" (*SOIO*, September 1, 1877), 'St. Hubert', referring to a Bengali artillery officer who not only shot 13 doe ibex but boasted about it at the Ooty Club, posed, "..Does it occur to the (I cannot call him "gallant") Major that he is as mere a poacher as the English labourer, who shoots pheasants by night in a preserve..." (*SOIO*, June 14, 1879).[19]

Reasons for the presence of such non-conforming European hunters is not far to seek. First of all, game meat had a privileged place in the European table - though it was played down in the colonial discourse and presented as the attribute of the native. While they sent out native shikaris to shoot woodcocks for their table ('Hawkeye' 1881 : 27), the natives did brisk business in small game meat. The Badags went from house to house in Ootacamund hawking hares, jungle fowls, spurfowls etc. (*SOIO*, May 28, 1879; see also *SOIO*, February 1, 1879).[20] Significantly, even the purists, as if it were a slippage, admitted their fancy for game meat. 'Hawkeye' (1881 : 12), regaling his readers about the delights sambhur deer could offer, wrote, "The flesh is good eating, if kept sufficiently long. In the winter it keeps good for a fortnight: the head makes savoury pottage, the feat delicious jelly; the liver is not bad, and the steaks are some I can tell you; and marrow-pudding is not to be despised; and tongue, well salted, is as good as rein-deer's." Big Bore's (1924 : 101) favourite seems to be bear flesh: "Bear flesh smells just like ham, and indeed when a bear is being skinned it is possible to imagine the near vicinity of a bacon factory."

The importance attached to game meat by the European emigrants in Ooty comes out more than clearly in their anxiety whether the Game Act would come in the way of its supply. A troubled

19. Campbell's *The Old Forest Ranger* is full of instances which illuminate how the European elite thought valour as their exclusive monopoly. Let me cite an example. In the course of Campbell's narrative, the upper class Kate is thrown down from her horse while accompanying a hunting party, but she immediately regains her feet and rides the horse again. On this, Charles, who is courting Kate, characteristically thinks to himself, "...It is the *Caste* that tells - the lightning in her blood which prevents it from stagnating round her heart like the muddy stream which flows in the veins of the plebeian" (Campbell 1845 : 255-6). While Kate's upper class status gives her more of valour compared to any plebeian, her subordinate position as a woman within her class, denies her the same, now in comparison to the men of her class. For example, a few pages after the above episode, Kate, who is saved now from a wounded bear by Charles, repents for "participating in a sport so ill suited for her sex!..." (Campbell 1845 : 271).

20. We may note here, the members of the Nilgiris Game Association, which campaigned for the conservation of game, pledged not only to observe a close season during which no hunting would be practised, but also not to purchase game during the close season ('An Old Shikarri' 1880 : Appendix, iii).

correspondent wrote to the *South of India Observer*, "Can you inform me whether live game, such as teal, patridges and jungle fowl, captured on the slopes, outside the limits prescribed for the Game Act, and brought to Ootacamund for sale, will subject the owners to any of the penalties prescribed in the Act, I conceive that importations of the kind are perfectly legal and yet the men who brings up the birds, are molested by the police" (*SOIO*, October 29, 1881). And when Bernard, a local shopkeeper, was semi-officially warned "against obtaining game from Madras" and retailing it to the residents of the town, the *South of India Observer* sarcastically commented, "We shall next hear that the sale of soups and tinned game are likewise prohibited" (*SOIO*, May 8, 1880). In short, so far as the passion for game meat went, the Europeans in the hills exhibited the very same utilitarian tendency which aided the colonial discourse to inferiorise the hunting activities of the native.

In addition to the subversive role played by game meat in giving rise to these non-conforming European hunters in the hills, there were other important factors too. The Nilgiri hills encountered at least three distinct groups of Europeans, who, for different set of reasons, did not bother to conform to the colonial canons of sport. They were the planters, the army personnel of the Wellington cantonment and the visitors during the hunting season.

The European planters in the Nilgiris did not quite become part of the upper class society in the hills: "Though most came from respectable enough class backgrounds in England, the nature of their work and their involvement in a commercial enterprise placed them in position inferior in power and prestige to the officials and officers..." (Mandelbaum 1989 : 12). Working in mountainous tracts, which were often removed from the main towns of the Nilgiris by 20 to 50 miles, they had an `easy' relationship (despite acute economic exploitation) with the natives. "Some of the planters `went native' and formed families of Anglo-kurumbas, for example, or indulged themselves in similar liaisons of a more temporary nature with selected tea-pluckers" (Hockings 1989 : 352). Rather revealingly, a report on the first meeting of the Nilgiris Game Association held on June 14, 1877, noted that it was attented by 26 "gentlemen, residents and planters on the hills" (`An Old Shikari' 1880 : Apppendix i). Planters were thus not gentlemen!

The European planters, whose prime concern was the economic health of their plantations, claimed that sambhur, spotted deer and other animals were mere pests destroying their plantations, especially young chinchona plants. While the purists argued that the claims of the planters about the destruction done to crops by sambhur was an exaggeration (See, for example, *SOIO*, January 1, 1881) and the planters were hunting to pay their workers in meat (*SOIO*, September 15, 1877 and June 19, 1887), planters spiritedly defended their position and entered into bitter conflicts with the purists. Responding to Barhoo's argument that game was declining in the hills, 'Pop-Gun', a planter, retorted,

> If "Barhoo" is under the impression that sambhur are scarce on the Neilgherries he had better visit some of the plantations on the slopes of the hills and take note of how many thousands of coffee and chinchona plants are destroyed by them every night, of how many miles of cultivated ground are ploughed up by them, fences broken, roads ruined, drains stopped up and every species of damage done. "Barhoo" I dare say will exclaim `perish the plantations rather than that my sport shall be baulked,' but this game question has two sides, and I, for one, should be very glad to see sambur a vast deal scarcer than they

are at present (*SOIO*, August 25, 1877).

Another planter who joined issue with 'Barhoo', was also equally scathing: "Let them [the purists] buy up all the available waste land and so keep planatations out! The amount of money required would be as nothing compared with the large sum expended on cultivation by the planters - but I fear this plan will not answer, as the "Barhoo" type sportsman likes best to shoot his game at other people's expense" (*SOIO*, September 5, 1877). Such arguments provided a rather validating basis for the planters to function outside the colonial canons of sport. Importantly, they also employed native shikaris to guard their plantations from sambhur.

The army personnel of Wellington Cantonment, especially the soldiers, not only had alternative sites to affirm their masculinity, but also lived in a world of their own, bothering not much about the norms of the European elites of Ooty. In fact, they existed in a state of constant friction with the Ooty society - the friction arising from such acts of the soldiers as lifting away the residents' dogs (*SOIO*, November 16, 1878). One must bear in mind here that the British soliders were basically drawn from poorer classes (Ballhatchat 1980 : 2). Even the implementation of the Game Act could not restrain them from unrestrained hunting. The *South of India Observer* carried numerous stories about Wellington soldiers such as, "...the provisions of the Game laws are daily violated by soldiers at Wellington and Coonoor... We are informed that there is scarcely a day in the week in which hares and wild fowl are not shot by men from the Convalescent Depot." (*SOIO*, August 11, 1883: see also, *SOIO*, August 18, 1883). The army officers were no better: "The officers of the Wellignton Depot, we believe, are not guiltless of transgressing the Game Act. The first woodcock of the season was, we are told, shot by one of these gentlemen, who permitted a native to snatch the glory of the deed from him for obvious reasons..." (*SOIO*, November 19, 1887). We have also cited already the case of the Bengali artillery officer who not only shot 13 doe ibexes, but also boasted about it at the Ooty Club. The army personnel were on the margins of the Ooty society and this marginality provided the space for them to function outside the discourse of the purists.

The last group of non-conformists were constituted by the annual short-term influx of Europeans from the plains who visited the hills for the specific purpose of hunting. They too, like the army personnel at Wellington, did not have any stakes in the Nilgiris society. Even purists did not expect them to conform to the norms of sport as defined by them. 'Hawkeye' (1881 : xix) noted, "... visitors could scarcely be expected to do so [show interest in the preservation of game] : they alas! come bent on slaughter in general, though there be some, I own with delight, who come for sport and are good and true sportsmen; but they are few, the others legion."

Thus, in short, the self and the other as defined in the colonial discourse on hunting encountered challenges not only from the native but also from a substantial section of the Europeans themselves. The hilarious story of Rees, as recounted by Horne (1928 : 57-8), brings out how difficult it was for the purists to contain the European emigrants within the bounds of super-masculine stereotype:

> The Ooty correspondent of the "Madras Mail" once astonished sportsmen in the plains by a telegram to the effect that "Mr Rees has broken his collar bone, pig-sticking". That rising member of the ICS and future MP was a more enthuiastic than accomplished horseman, and people wondered what he had been doing. Later and more detailed information turned

wonder into amusement when it was learnt that the quarry was a "basti Wallah" [village pig] and the lethal weapon a billiard cue. It transpired that Rees and a few other young bloods in default of the real sport, had organised a lark of the nature indicated. It is, of course possible to get just as bad a fall in pursuit of a village pig as of the mighty boar himself.

The Game Act

Let us now turn to how the purists met these challenges to their discourse which, as we have already seen, constructed the self as masculine and the other as utilitarian and effeminate. The purists were basically left with two options: either to modify their discourse to suit the actual world of hunting in the hills or to tame the defiant world to suit their discourse. They chose to tame the world rather than to abandon the word and attempted to exclude the native from the domains of hunting as well as to limit all hunting activities exclusively to acts of acquiring trophies.

First and foremost, the purists emphasised that the native should be deprived of access to firearms. 'Hawkeye' (1881 : 207-8) argued, "One advantage of the registry certificate of fire-arms will be the ascertaining the number of weapons in the hands of the natives generally. After the mutiny, the "Arms Act" provided for certain scrutiny in this particular, but of late years there has been much, and, to say the least, improper laxity on this important point. On these Hills the natives have a great number of arms, orginally granted by Government to protect their crop from marauding wild hog, now turned against the sambur and other game at all seasons; and they have done no end of mischief in that line." Suggesting provisions for a Game Act, he argued that the granting of arms to any native for "the purpose of self-defence, or destruction of ferocious animals" should be supported by "not less than two credible witnesses." G.A.R. Dawson ('An Old Shikarri' 1880 : 26) went a step further and claimed that the native should be completely deprived of firearms. To quote him, "...as to the Badaga and ryot with his miserable field crop, he can well take care of that as he always has done - when sambur were much more numerous - by thorn fencing and sitting up howling and yelling all night long to scare them away." It is not surprising that the resolutions passed by the Nilgiris Game Association in its first meeting, demanded licensing of guns ('Hawkeye' 1881 : Appendix, ii). Significantly, soon after the Game Act was passed in 1879, "A raid upon the villages has ...been made and all the firearms called in. Several hundreds of fowling pieces have thus been withdrawn nominally under the Arms Act, but really to give effect to the Game Law" (*SOIO*, June 18, 1879). To the purists, it was not only the firearms of the native, but his other hunting accessories were also to be restricted. 'Hawkeye' (1881 : 214), suggesting a half yearly tax of 12 annas on the dogs at Ooty and Coonoor, reasoned that "it will lead to the destruction of many of the dogs the native shikarries so constantly take out with them".

Secondly, the purist hunters made concerted efforts to reduce their dependence on native trackers, who, given their knowledge regime, dominated the dominators at least momentarily. While 'Big Bore' (1924 : 43) prepared a list of 17 reliable native shikaris with their places of residence for the benefit of his readers, the first meeting of the Nilgiris Game Association demanded that native shikaris should register themselves ('An Old Shikarri' 1880 : Appendix, iii; see also *SOIO*, June 7, 1879). More significant was the fact that there were also efforts to prepare maps of the hunting grounds in the Nilgiri hills. A travellers' guide to the Nilgiris claimed, "The hunting area

has been surveyed and an excellant map prepared, which it is almost indispensible for a new-comer to possess and study until he becomes familiar with the country, the various converts and the safe crossing over the bogs and morasses in the valley between the knolls and eminences" (*Illustrated Guide To Nilgiris* ...1912 : 60).

Thirdly, they suggested that the native should be prohibited from selling game meat to the residents of Ooty. Explicating the reasons for this suggestion, 'Hawkeye' (1881 : 286) wrote, "It [the prohibition] leaves the sportsman the opportunity to indulge in his pastime, if he chooses, and even the native shikarrie may kill game, but he cannot sell it; he would accordingly consider it too great a loss of powder and shot, so we may calculate on being safe with him."

These attempts at excluding the native from the domain of hunting and thus denying him the space to challenge the coloniser's always already fragile masculinity, was accompanied by systematic attack on the non-conforming Europeans as we have already seen.[21]

The culmination of these efforts of the purists to change the world to suit their discourse was the Nilgiri Game and Fish Preservation Act of 1879 which was passed on 24 March 1879. The initial version of the act, which was the direct outcome of the campaign by the Nilgiris Game AssocitION, imposed a closing season, during which "it shall not be lawful for any person to shoot at, kill, capture, pursue or sell or attempt to kill, capture or sell game." The punitive clause of the Act read: "Every person convicted before a Magistrate ... shall be liable for a first offence to a penalty not exceeding rupees fifty and to the forfeiture to Government, at the discretion of the Magistrate, of the game, birds or fishes taken, and of all guns, engines, implements, nets and dogs used in or for the purpose of aiding the commission of such offence, and, in default of payment of fine, to simple imprisonment for a period not exceeding one month, and for every second and subsequent offences to a penalty not exceeding rupees one hundred and the same liability to forfeiture, and in default of payment to simple imprisonment for a period not exceeding two months." The Act excluded from its purview hunting for the protection of crops in private lands.

Soon after the Act came into force, 'Ranger', a purist hunter in the hills, wrote,

> I would ... suggest to our Commissioner, and his subordinates, the positive necessity of at once causing the provisions of new Game Law to be translated into the various dialects of the District over which they hold sway. An authorised public crier should also be despatched with a sonorous tom-tom, not only throughout the bazars of Ootacamunt, Coonoor, Kotagherry, etc., but also to every Badaga and Kota village, warning all natives that it is imperative upon all classes who are addicted to the pastime of roving gun in hand, from shola to shola, that they can now no longer do so without first registering their arms and taking out the

21. In other contexts too, the colonial discourse attempted to exclude such Europeans who came in the way of "the seductive vision of British India as an empire almost exclusively for European power, wealth and respectability..." David Arnold's study of the European orphans and vagrants in the 19th century India, for instance, notes, "...when they [upper class Europeans] glimpsed a white orphan playing in the bazaar, or when a white tramp in red fez and Indian slippers shuffled into their compound, their reaction was to try to make them invisible, to shut them up in orphanages and workhouses, or, a last resort, deport them..." (Arnold 1979 : 124).

required licence. The pains and penalties attached to the non-fulfilment of the above law and the prohibitory clause regarding the close season months, should be carefully explained at each village, so that when any delinquent is summoned before proper authority, he shall not plead ignorance and thus escape punishment. The gentlemen who were elected to watch over certain portion of the outlying districts should be empowered by the Commissioner to enter suspected villages, harbouring offenders, to search for arms and ammunitions etc. The headmen of the villages should be warned that it will be considered imperative upon them to aid in the detection of culprits, and that if they attempt to screen any one who has broken the law, they will be themsleves severely dealt with... As for European poachers etc., they should never have the slightest mercy shown to them... (*SOIO*, May 28, 1879).[22]

Ranger's suggestions need no comment; their motives are only too transparent. The government positively responded to the strident campaign by the purists over the years, and the Game Act became more and more stringent with time and defined in no uncertain terms that hunting should not be practised in the hills unless it conformed to the canons of the colonial discourse on hunting. In the early 20th century, for instance, a hefty licence fee of Rs.50 (which most of the natives and poorer Europeans in any case could not afford)[23] permitted a licence holder to shoot not more than two sambhur stags, two spotted deer stags, six jungle sheep, one ibex, three antelopes and one bison; and the licence holder was legally bound to give a record of game to the Nilgiri Game Association, a failure of which could lead to the denial of licence during subsequent seasons. Important for our purpose are those provisions of the Act which prescribed what the licence holder should *not* do. It prescribed that the licence holder should not shoot at, wound or kill "the females or immature males of" bison, sambhur, spotted deer, ibex and antelope as well as mature male sambhur or spotted deer which were hornless or whose horns were in velvet. The manner in which the Act defined the immature males is also quite revealing. According to the Act,

A sambhur is defined as immature if neither of its horns measures 32 inches in length.

A spotted deer is defined as immature if neither of its horns measures 30 inches in length.

22. Though the purists rhetorically equated the non-conforming Europeans with the natives, they, when it came to the question of taking punitive action, seemed to have turned a blind eye to the offending Europeans. After the passing of the Game Act, it became almost a commonplace in the Nilgiri hills for the Europeans to hunt without taking licences (see, for example, *SOIO*, November 14, 1885; and October 15, 1887). The Nilgiris Game Association's apathy in not prosecuting such European offenders led 'Skylark' to write, "I venture to say that if shikkaries Ramaswamy and Jogher were the offenders they would have been put up before a Magistrate long ore..." (*SOIO*, November 21, 1885).

23. The progressive enhancement of the licence fee exasperated the poorer Europeans in the hills. 'Fair play', taking up issues with the upper class Europeans, lamented,"There are many people (hardworking clerks, shop keepers and others) who look forward to two or three days in the year for an outing with the gun as being almost the only bit of pleasure or recreation that they can obtain. The wealthier members of the community have scarcely anything else but pleasure all the year round... Why then, in the name of humanity, should they seek to debar their less fortunate brethren from a few days' pleasurable excitement with the shooting irons. Is this reasonable to suppose that men whose incomes are under Rs.200 per month can pay Rs.30 for the privilege of using the gun for about seven days, or so in the year" (*SOIO*, August 22, 1891).

Note: The measurement shall be taken along the outer curve of the horn from the burr to the point.

A bison is defined as immature if the span of its horns is less than 33 inches.

Note: A measurement shall be taken horizontally between the outer edges of the horn at their widest spread.

An ibex is defined as immature on which saddle is not fully developed.

An antelope is defined as immature if the length of its longest horn is less than 14 inches ('Big Bore', 1924 : 128).

Clearly, hunting, according to these provisions of the Act, meant hunting only for trophies, and utilitarian motives had hardly any place there - a purist's definition of sports indeed. The Game Act was, thus, an effort by the purists to alter the defiant realities of the hunting world in the Nilgiri hills, which kept the colonial discourse on hunting in a perennial state of vulnerability, so as to make it cohere with the colonial discourse. After all, surrendering the masculinity of the colonising white male at the alter of reality would mean to give up an important validating basis for the colonial project itself. Whether the Game Act did succeed in resolving this contest between the world and the word is, however, another story.

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